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Amendments to the claims:

1. (currently amended) A method for joining at least two work pieces (13, 14) by friction stir welding using a rotating tool (10) with a pin-like projection (11) comprising the steps of:

[a] placing said at least two work pieces (13, 14) on top of one another such that the areas to be joined are disposed adjacent one another,

[b] moving said rotating tool (10) onto the uppermost work piece (13) in the area where the work pieces are to be joined such that said pin-like projection (11) engages said uppermost work piece (13) and, while being pressed against said work piece, generates friction heat to at least plasticize the material of said uppermost work piece (13),

[c] moving said rotating tool (10) axially toward the lowermost work piece (14) through the material being plasticized only until it contacts the top surface of the lowermost work piece (14) without penetrating the lower workpiece so as to produce, due to friction of the pin-like projection (11) on the surface of the lowermost workpiece (14), a metallically clean surface whereby a gastight joint is formed between the upper and the lowermost workpiece (13, 14), and

[d] then removing said rotating tool (10).

2. (original) A method according to claim 1, wherein an alloyed joint is formed between the work pieces by the plasticized materials which were intermixed during the friction stir welding.

3. (original) A method according to claim 1, wherein oxides are removed from the surfaces of the work pieces as the pin-like projection (11) frictionally engages the surfaces of the work pieces.

4. (original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the tool (10) with the pin-like projection (11) is moved along the joint area.

5. (original) A method according to claim 1, wherein pressure is applied to the material while being plasticized.

6. (original) A method according to claim 5, wherein the pressure is applied by a shoulder (12) of the tool (10) around the pin-like projection (11).

7. (original) A method according to claim 1, wherein the work pieces (13, 14) are joined also in a form-locking manner.

8. (original) A method according to claim 7, wherein said work pieces (13, 14) are joined in a form-locking manner by the introduction of plasticized material into cavities (16) formed into the lower work piece (14).

9. (previously canceled)

10. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the length of said pin-like projection (11) is selected so as to correspond essentially to the thickness of the uppermost work piece (13) or upper work pieces placed on top of the lowermost work piece (14).

11. (previously canceled)

12. (previously canceled)